A Civil War Episode: General Mamontov in Tambov, August 1919

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Abstract

“Up until the 14th of August 1919, despite the number of military fronts connected with the civil war, for us in Kozlov, everything was more or less calm, at least, as calm as it gets behind the front lines.” These words introduce a brief set of reminiscences, published in the local Communist Party newspaper, Our Truth (Nasha Pravda), in the town of Kozlov, located in the central Russian province of Tambov. The occasion was the tenth anniversary of one of the most brutal episodes of the Russian civil war to take place in the province, namely “Mamantov’s Raid,” in which a force of Don Cossack cavalry, active in the anti-Bolshevik struggle in the south of Russia, advanced deep into Soviet territory, disrupting vital Red Army supply and communications links with the front line.

In the first week of August 1919, the White First Army Corps under General Alexander Kutepov struck at the junction of the 13th and 14th Soviet armies. The Red Front was broken, both armies were forced to begin a retreat deep into Ukraine. The troops of the VSYUR wedged into the formed gap. The unified corps under the command of Bredov rushed towards Kiev, which housed the staff and logistics units of the 12th Army. The Bolsheviks evacuated the city without a serious fight, after shooting hundreds of residents, detained by the Cheka in the last days of Bolshevik power in the city. From the west The Advance on Moscow was a military campaign of the White Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR), launched against the RSFSR in July 1919 during the Russian Civil War. The goal of the campaign was the capture of Moscow, which, according to the chief of the White Army Anton Denikin, would play a decisive role in the outcome of the Civil War and bring the Whites closer to the final victory. After initial successes, in which the city of Oryol (Orel) at only 360 km from Moscow was taken, Denikin’s